

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 107809 TOSEC 040204
ORIGIN PRS-01

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UNCLAS STATE 107809 TOSEC 040204

FOR HODDING CARTER FROM S/PRS -- NO. 20

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: SOPN

SUBJECT: PRESS ITEM

HEREWITH FULL TEXT OF AP STORY BY KEN FREED ON ISRAELI ARMS
SITUATION:

WASHINGTON (AP) -- ISRAEL AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT ARE
LOCKED IN A MAJOR LOBBYING BATTLE OVER A TENTATIVE CARTER
ADMINISTRATION DECISION TO RESTRICT THE TRANSFER OF US
ARMS AND TECHNOLOGY TO THE JEWISH STATE.

THE FIGHT IS THE FIRST MAJOR CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE
ISRAELIS AND US FOREIGN-POLICY MAKERS SINCE PRESIDENT
CARTER TOOK OFFICE. IT UNDERSCORES A GROWING AND POTEN-
Tially MORE SERIOUS DIVISION IN WASHINGTON-JERUSALEM
RELATIONS.

THAT IS THE FEAR BY ISRAEL THAT THE UNITED STATES IS
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MOVING TO SHACKLE THE JERUSALEM GOVERNMENT'S MILITARY
CAPABILITY AND THEREBY RESTRICT ITS FLEXIBILITY TO
OPPOSE ANY MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT THE UNITED STATES MIGHT
SEEK TO IMPOSE.

THE FIGHT CENTERS ON THREE SEPARATE BUT CLOSELY RELATED

ISSUES.

FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT IS THE SO-CALLED PRM 12. (THE NAME STANDS FOR "PRESIDENTIAL REVIEW MEMORANDUM," A WHITE HOUSE DOCUMENT.)

THIS ESTABLISHES TWO CATEGORIES OF US ARMS CLIENTS, ONE TO BE FAVORED IN TERMS OF COPRODUCTION OF US ARMS AND THE TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY AND SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS. ISRAEL IS NOT IN THAT CATEGORY.

SENATE SUPPORTERS OF ISRAEL ARE BACKING TWO RESOLUTIONS STATING THAT AMERICAN NATIONAL INTEREST WOULD BE SERVED BY ALLOWING ISRAEL TO COPRODUCE AMERICAN-DESIGNED WEAPONS, AND THAT THE US SHOULD DO NOTHING TO HARM ISRAEL'S DEFENSE CAPABILITY.

THE STATE DEPT IS PUSHING TO EITHER DRASTICALLY MODIFY OR DELAY ACTION ON BOTH THESE SENATE RESOLUTIONS.

UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE LUCY BENSON HAS BEEN PERSONALLY LOBBYING SENATORS, ARGUING THAT PASSAGE WOULD PRE-EMPT PRES CARTER AND WOULD OFFEND ARAB NATIONS AT A SENSITIVE TIME IN MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS.

THE ISRAELI EMBASSY, UNDER THE PERSONAL LEADERSHIP OF AMBASSADOR SIMCHA DINITZ, IS FIGHTING HARD FOR THE AMENDMENTS, WHICH COME UP FOR A VOTE IN THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE THURSDAY.

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ISRAELI SUPPORTERS CHARGE THE STATE DEPT WITH MISLEADING AND OTHERWISE UNFAIR TACTICS BUT PREDICT THE AMENDMENTS WILL PASS ANYWAY.

MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE AMENDMENTS FROM THE ISRAELI POINT OF VIEW IS THE NEED TO PRESSURE PRES CARTER TO MODIFY THE PRM.

THE MAXIMUM ISRAELI GOAL IS TO ELIMINATE THE SPLIT CATEGORIES ALTOGETHER ON GROUNDS THAT EACH WEAPONS REQUEST SHOULD BE CONSIDERED ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS.

AT THE LEAST, DINITZ WANTS HIS NATION INCLUDED IN THE LIST OF PREFERRED CLIENTS, WHICH TENTATIVELY INCLUDES NATO ALLIES. JAPAN, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND.

CARTER HAS THE PRM, WHICH WAS DRAFTED BY THE STATE DEPT, ON HIS DESK. WHITE HOUSE SOURCES SAY A DECISION IS

EXPECTED SHORTLY, PROBABLY BEFORE THE END OF NEXT WEEK. CHRISTOPHER

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